DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 273 CS 012 434

AUTHOR Murdoch, Sandra
TITLE Emphasizing the One Hundred Most Frequently Used Words in the Spelling Curriculum.
PUB DATE 27 Oct 95
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum; Elementary Education; Instructional Effectiveness; *Spelling; *Spelling Instruction; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Educational Issues; Reading Fluency; *Spelling Growth; *Word Choice

ABSTRACT

A recurrent issue in education is which spelling words should be taught and how they should be taught. A brief review of several articles that deal with the employment of spelling programs that have incorporated the 100 most frequently used words in their curriculum shows many similarities in philosophies and teaching methods. The concern about the 100 most frequently used words is not new: the earliest article reviewed was written in 1950. Why the persistence of this approach? Research shows that about 100 words make up half of all the words used in writing. If the student is accountable for these particular words, he/she can learn to recognize them instantly in order to achieve fluency in reading, writing, and spelling. The educator must choose the most effective method to implement the learning of the 100 words. Rebecca Sitton has developed groups of 3 types of spelling words: core words (lists of 10 words, divided by grade level); individual words (words each student selects for him- or herself); and priority words (former core words that students have mastered). Steve Graham and Karen Harris suggest a process known as preview, practice, and review. This method provides students with an efficient, systematic technique to study unknown spelling words. Many teachers still agree with the 6-step method developed by Ernest Horn in 1919, which asks students to memorize the word with their eyes closed and then write it down. (Contains the list of the 100 most frequently used words.) (TB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 395 273

Emphasizing the One Hundred Most Frequently Used Words in the Spelling Curriculum

by

Sandra Murdoch

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Dominican College of San Rafael
School of Education

October 27, 1995

CS 224434

 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A recurrent issue in education is the concern over which spelling words should be taught and how they should be taught. This paper is a brief review of several articles that deal with the employment of spelling programs that have incorporated the one hundred most frequently used words in their curriculum. These articles have many similarities in their philosophies and teaching methods that I would like to address.

This method is not new. In fact, one of the articles I have read, "One Hundred Words Most Often Misspelled By Children" was written in 1950. The most recent article I have read on the subject, "What Works In Spelling" was written in 1995.

Why compile these one hundred words? Research shows that certain one hundred words make up half of all the words we use in writing. Edward Fry labels these words as the "Instant Word List" (Fry,1980). (See page 6). If the student is accountable for these particular words, he can learn to recognize them instantly in order to achieve fluency in reading, writing, and spelling. A smaller basic core list of words can also be advantageous for students with learning disabilities. Recent research indicates that students with learning disabilities mastered more spelling words when the number to be learned each week was reduced (Graham, Harris, Loynachan, 1993).

How does the teacher implement this method? According to the article, "What Works In Spelling" (1995), Rebecca Sitton, a language arts consultant and former teacher has developed the

Spelling Sourcebook series. This series gives the teacher lots of options for adapting the program to suit ones own teaching style. For example, there are three types of spelling words:

1) Core words - lists of ten or fewer words, divided by grade level that every student practices.

2) Individual words - words each student selects for himself.

3) Priority words - former core words that students have mastered. Students are responsible for always spelling them correctly.

A technique that came up in many of these articles was preview, practice, and review. In the article, "Effective Spelling Instruction" (Graham, 1983), he states that spelling is an independent skill and that transfer effects from other curriculum areas should not be expected. In reading instruction, we expect the first story in a grade level to be easier than the last because children increase in reading skill. In spelling however, an unknown word is an unknown word which has to be mastered (Hillerich 1977). Each student should be taught an efficient, systematic technique to study unknown spelling words. Many teachers and researchers still agree upon the method established by Ernest Horn, in 1919, for learning to spell words from a list approach. It is an effective way to study a word specifically for spelling and involves visual, auditory, and kinisthetic modalities. It involves these steps:

1) Look at the word and say it to yourself.

2) Close your eyes and visualize the word.

3) Check to see if you were right. (If not, begin at #1)

4) Cover the word and write it.

5) Check to see if you were right. (If not begin at #1)

6) Repeat steps 4 and 5 two more times (Graham, 1983)

After students have previewed, practiced, and reviewed their spelling words, they need to engage in subsequent springboard activities. These researchers have stated the importance of incorporating activities and games in order to promote students interests. Many students enjoy games such as hangman, scrambled words, spelling bingo, etc. Learning a list of words can be a boring lesson, so liven it up with activities that are fun (Fry,1980).

All of these researchers promote writing as a very important element in a spelling program. Since these one hundred words make up 50% of what we write, the children should be writing these words over and over again. If children are to maintain and further their spelling skills, they must do lots of writing. Research evidence suggests that formal spelling with word lists should not begin until second grade, but the first grade teacher should provide many experiences with a focus on the high frequency words (Hillerich, 1977).

Many of the articles stated the importance of keeping the spelling lesson short. Most students do not benefit from extended

periods of study in spelling (Graham, Harris, Loynachan 1983).

It seems, like so many other teaching methods, that the use core spelling words has come full circle. In order to achieve a successful spelling program, there needs to be a balanced approach. The state of California deems it necessary to go back to the "drill-memorize" approach and to de-emphasize "inventive spelling" as one of their solutions to create good spellers. I find it interesting that not one researcher or teacher in these articles wrote about "inventive spelling". They see the merit of using several different strategies in order to promote good spelling. They have used many of the "multiple intelligences" in their teaching of these one hundred words. Drill and memorization are fine if they are used with writing, follow-through activities, and understanding the importance of priority words. These one hundred most frequently used words are important not only for writing but also for other literacy activities such as reading and comprehension as well.

The classroom teachers who have incorporated this method have already seen the difference in overall spelling. According to Shari Chu, a second grade teacher, "The children are more aware of spelling, and their writing is more polished. I can really tell a difference" (What Works In Spelling, 1995). This teacher and others have seen that students who use these word lists and write with these words every day, will know how to spell the one hundred most frequently used words - the words that they use the most.

The Instant Words

First Hundred

the	or	will	number
of	one	up	no
and	had	other	way
a	by	about	could
to	word	out	people
in	but	many	my
is	not	then	than
you	what	them	first
that	all	these	water
it	were	so	been
he	we	some	call
was	when	her	who
for	your	would	oil
on	can	make	now
are	said	like	find
as	there	him	long
with	use	into	down
his	an	time	day
they	each	has	did
I	which	look	get
at	she	two	come
be	do	more	made
this	how	write	may
have	their	go	part
from	if	see	over

(Edward Fry, 1980)

References:

Fry, Edward. (1980). The New Instant Word List. The Reading Teacher, December, 284-289.

Graham, Steve, Harris, Karen R., Loynachan, Connie. (1993) The Basic Spelling Vocabulary List. Journal Of Educational Research, 86, 363-368.

Hillerich, Robert L. (1977) Let's Teach Spelling - Not Phonetic Misspelling. Language Arts, 54, 301-307.

Johnson, Leslie W. (1950) One Hundred Words Most Often Misspelled By Children In The Elementary Grades. Journal Of Educational Research, 44, 154-165.

What Works In Spelling (1995). Learning, 47-48.